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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 8657  
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SUBJECT: JAPANESE PM SEEKS TO ENHANCE POLITICAL AND  
ECONOMIC TIES TO SAUDI ARABIA

Classified By: Political Counselor David H. Rundell for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

¶1. (C) Japanese Prime Minister (PM) Shinzo Abe traveled to Riyadh on April 28 to discuss with the SAG economic and political cooperation, the Middle East Peace Initiative, and Japan's permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council. According to a contact at the Japanese Embassy, the primary purpose of the recent visit was to reinforce and establish new commercial and investment ties between Saudi Arabia and Japan. The PM's delegation also included over 100 Japanese businessmen.

¶2. (C) A Japanese official in Riyadh told PolOff on May 1 that the GOJ would like to become more involved in international politics, particularly in the Middle East. He explained that, "after World War II, Japan decided to be a small country that concentrated in business and commerce. Now, we would like to participate politically." He continued that the GOJ would like a seat on the UN Security Council, adding that in 2008, Japan will seek a much more prominent role in the United Nations. He noted that the "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" fully supports America's role in the Middle East, saying that PM Abe was visiting moderate Arab states as a sign to America that Japan's interests are the same as America's.

¶3. (C) The official said he was surprised during the private meeting between Abe and the King when the issue of Iran arose. He said the King told Abe that he did not like the way the "world" was isolating Iranian President Ahmadinejad. He said that he does not want to see nuclear weapons in Iran or anywhere else in the region, but that the world has to apply the rules fairly. According to the official, the King said that things are getting worse because the Iranians "could become desperate and then do anything."

¶4. (C) Our Japanese interlocutor pointed out that the main reason for the visit was to establish more private sector commercial ties between Saudi Arabia and Japan. He said that when business delegations accompany the Prime Minister during his visits to other countries, they are usually already doing business in those countries. With this visit, however, the businessmen were not involved in Saudi Arabia, and they were pursuing opportunities.

¶5. (U) Following PM Abe's Riyadh meetings, a joint statement was released announcing:

-- enhanced, high-level political dialogue between the two countries' foreign ministers, the establishment of a joint task force to facilitate industrial investment opportunities in both countries, and the conclusion of negotiations on the free trade agreement between Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council;

-- re-affirmation of support for the creation of an "independent and viable" Palestinian state, recognition of the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative as approved at the Beirut Summit in 2002 and the Arab Summit in Riyadh in 2007, as well as the roadmap, and a call for the international community to facilitate and increase its assistance to the Palestinians;

-- support for reconciliation and disbandment of all armed militia groups in Iraq and assistance to the Iraqi people;

-- "solidarity with Lebanon" and support to a Lebanese government that preserves the national unity, security, stability, and sovereignty of Lebanon over its entire territory;

-- a call for all states in the Middle East to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and make the region free from all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means; and

-- support for a diplomatic resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue and Iranian cooperation with UNSCRs 1696, 1737, and 1747, as well as the IAEA.  
FRAKER